

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/bringing-innovation-to-the-food-industry/>

Splendid Spoon co-CEO Elise Densborn explains how the company has used technology to respond to customer demand and manage a complex supply network. She observes that one of the secrets to their ability to scale rapidly has been building a disparate, lean operating footprint with smart technology integration.



Transcript

- There's a couple ways to look at it.. 00:00:05,970 And first is sort of like the direct.... There's the demand side, right? There's the thinking about customers and how sort of like our eCommerce platform allows us to do that.. So like I shared in my presentation, it's like we get the feedback, we can innovate quickly, we can take greater risks, and we have greater certainty of what is the sort of like dimensions of success in a meal and sort of like how customers are behaving in order patterns and things of that nature.. So that gives us sort of like the tech elements of that and the data elements of that are definitely helpful on us meeting, and exceeding, and anticipating the customer need faster and better.. And then on the supply side, we have this entire super complex network of external partners, and there's not really, like.... It's evolved since we've started this, for sure, but there wasn't like a set tech stack when we started, like Shopify didn't exist when Splendid Spoon started.. So we actually jumped into custom building very early on.. And I'll come back to that 'cause we actually are in both worlds now.. But it's a very interesting thing of stringing together and integrating all these disparate tech systems that are not ours just to fulfill orders..

And so that is sort of like those.... That super disparate lean operating footprint has been one of our sort of secrets of success from a cost structure perspective, but it required us to have really smart technology building and integrations of all these different systems.. So I kind of view tech as the bridge between these two worlds.. Like you said, the brains is sort of like tech forward and tech enabled and the brawns is like the raw muscle of actually producing a food product.. And old school, been around forever.. One of the oldest industries, right, is how you manufacture food.. Sure, we brought innovation to the format and how it's actually produced and brought to scale and brought to customers at their doorstep.. But obviously, food is not a new industry.. And so for us, that is, like, both a cultural problem and a business design problem that we try to solve with technology.. So from, as it relates to our actual tech stack, like I said, we're a fully custom build and we think that's important for us to really own that customer relationship and to do this business model design uniquely in the way that we do it..

And we also leverage the power of Shopify and the speed and the agility that that provides with all of the plugins and tools in the entire ecosystem that exists around that new technology to market, and iterate, and communicate, and understand how we can continue to invest what we learn from that experience into our core platform, which is actually something we

stumbled into through COVID and a response to that market environment.. So it's been a pivot here and a pivot there, but tech has definitely been a big part of what's enabled us to scale so quickly and rapidly with having such a lean team...